

BE BRAVE,
BOLD ROBOT!

SUMMER
2005!

#13



Hello. Welcome Home. Have a glass of water. G'head, take off your shoes. If you see something you like, please, Feel Free to touch and ask questions about it. Nuestra casa es su casa. If you happen to particularly enjoy any piece of writing, etc., contained within, and want to copy or republish, or contact said piece's author, please email - deanhaakenson@gmail.com - If you would like to submit something, anything (drawings, text, rubbings), please email. If you would like to email, please email. If you would like to please, please please. If you would like to post or find out about quality Sacramento area musical performances, go to <http://undietacos.sexyprison.com>. "be brave bold robot" phrase lovingly stolen from the sexily vandalized women's bathroom stalls at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California and located on the world wide web at www.bebraveboldrobot.org.

sacramento open mics

SUN

Java Café & Brew *19:00

(Fair Oaks and Madison...in the suburbs)

MON

The Blue Lamp (Alhambra & N) *20:30

The Fox and Goose (10th and R) *19:30

TUE

It's A Grind Coffee Shop *19:00

Sunrise & Cirby, NW Corner, Roseville

G Street Pub, 228 G St., Davis *20:30

Capitol Garage, (15th and K) *20:30

WED

Old Ironsides (10th & S) *20:00

FRI

Cosmic Café, 530.642.8481

594 Main St., Placerville, *19:00

In a field of sheep, all heads are down.

There was once a people so afraid
Of the night they invented electricity.
They built cities based on squares
To taunt the moon
And designed the products of electricity round,
To mock the moon.
They forbade gems of any hue
The stars you see, the stars.
The society divided itself by lineage
of detail.
And as the categories
enumerated, quiet became lame
Unable to enunciate and sustain.
In eternal day fostered a culture of worry
vibrations of Spider silk.



Scott BAILEY.....♂

Kenneth FIGULY.....♂

Dean HAAKENSEN.....♂

James HENDERSON.....♂

Darte HUNT.....♂, very much so.

♂.....Scott MOORE

♀.....Cassandra SMITH

♂.....Craig STEPHENS

♀.....Nicole WILSON

Sister Huff

"The truly capable wife, who can find?
Her value is far beyond the price of corals.
In her the heart of her owner has put trust,
and from her he will derive no little profit.
She has rewarded him with good, and not bad,
all the days of her life." Proverbs 31:10-12

Cheryl Huff wheeled her husband out through the lobby of the Kingdom Hall. The quiet crowd pressed slowly toward the door, mumbling sincere good-nights. She pushed Clark and his chair out into the parking lot, to the patient 1974 AMC Pacer Hatchback parked under the mercury-vapor security light. She unbuckled his safety belt, grabbed him under his arms, and pivoted him into the passenger seat. She folded up his wheelchair, hefted it into the hatchback, and got into the driver's seat. She started the car and started for home. Neither of them spoke.

Cheryl was a small white woman with a flat bush of frizzy hair. She had no nose to speak of, and what there was of it was wide and flat. She was by far the saddest woman on the planet. Clark was a large man with a huge, bald head. He had been in a bad car wreck when he was young, and now he smelled like medicine and piss. The Pacer's fan belt squealed into the mellow night as they passed under serene sycamores, green-lit from within by yellow halogen streetlights.

Cheryl pulled the car into the driveway of their duplex and began the familiar labor of moving Clark into his chair. She pushed him up the concrete ramp.

"I'm tired." She said.

"Yeah, so am I."

They watched TV for three hours. Cheryl looked at Clark. His face was lit blue from the television screen. He was still a handsome man. He chuckled softly at something on TV.

"He is a good man," she thought to herself.

"There's nothing but garbage on these days." he said.

"Yeah." she answered, "Do you want to get ready for bed, dear?"

"OK."

She started running a bath for him, lukewarm and shallow. He rolled into the bathroom and took off his shirt. He used his armrests to lift his torso up while she pulled his pants off. He used the handrails to lower his upper half into the bath,

while she guided his legs in. She scrubbed his chest and thought about Jimmy Burnett.

"I can do that myself, dear." said Clark.

She handed him the washrag and started on his feet.

"You sure are nice," Jimmy had said nearly 30 years ago,

"And you have pretty eyes."

"OK, you can turn over now, dear."

Clark's skin squeaked on the plastic porcelain as he rolled over. Some water splashed out onto the floor and began soaking into the bathmat that she was kneeling on.

"Sorry."

He looked like a big pink mouse under the fluorescents.

"Oh, thank you, Jimmy." she thought.

"That's OK, dear." she said.

She remembered the first time that she met Clark.

He had been a handsome young man, shifting nervously in his seat.

"OK, you're done." she said, quietly.

"Thank you, Cheryl."

"You're welcome."

The red numbers on the dresser said 2:31. Cheryl had been staring at the blinds since 10:28. She tried to recall what she had been thinking about for the past 4 hours, but all that came to her was the ringing in her ears. She got up and walked into the kitchen. She opened the door to the fridge and stared blankly inside into the pale glow. She was hungry, but nothing sounded yummy. She pulled a frozen baby mouse out of a ziplock baggie. She walked down the hallway, holding the cold thing away from her. She dropped it into the aquarium that held the snake, and quickly padded out of the room before she could hear him moving.

The next meeting was on Thursday night. Scrawny little Brother Daniels was giving a talk about evolution. All of his words sounded the same.

"This must be what it feels like to be on drugs." Cheryl thought. She had only been drunk one time in her life, in high school. Jimmy had invited her over to his family's house for dinner. Before they ate he took her into the backyard and gave her some peppermint schnapps. She had embarrassed herself at the dinner table by blurting out: "I wish I was a sparrow, so I could fly and catch bugs at the same time!" She had laughed hysterically at herself, while the family shuffled around uncomfortably.

Jimmy hadn't been a particularly handsome boy. He had a weak chin, a large mole on the rim of one nostril and wore a huge bushy mustache that was just funny.

But he took her to the prom, and they danced until the teachers said that everybody had to leave the gym. Then he drove her up to the hills with him in his big, red Mustang. She sat silent and nervous in the passenger seat. The noisy engine vibrated her, and she was glad for it, as it masked the trembling in her legs. They both hoped that he would stay brave long enough to get her.

"Now I ask you, would God make a mistake? Or could this just happen to happen on its own? No, brothers and sisters, clearly the eye alone is just one example of the perfection of Jehovah God's grand design at work. Thank you."

Brother Daniels shuffled off the stage, everybody clapped and sighed and stretched and stood up and looked for their stuff and the room began to slowly fill with chatter. A huge woman calmly walked up to Cheryl. Her small husband followed.

"Oh, hello Sister Cohen. Hi Stanley" said Cheryl.

"Have you heard about Cameron?" asked Phyllis.

"Oh no, what is it now?"

"He's on drugs again."

"Dear, I'm sure Cheryl.." attempted Stanley.

"Shut up Stanley. It's cocaine, he's been on cocaine for weeks now. He's been out all night every night, and this time Maria caught him with another woman."

"Oh my..."

"Well, it's no surprise, it's not the first time you know. But always before, he's apologized to the elders when they talk to him about it. But not this time. Last night Brother Langston and Brother Daniels went over to his house and he said he wasn't sorry at all. He was totally unrepentant about it, and drunk, too."

"Wow, that's too bad..."

"Yes, too bad all right. I've heard they're talking about disfellowshipping him. Poor Maria. I'd die of shame if... PHILLIP! COME HERE! What have I told you about associating with those Bailey boys?"

"That I shouldn't do it..."

"That's right you shouldn't do it, and later I'll tell you why, all over again. Bad association spoils useful habits. Look at this darling boy, you really can't stay mad at an angel like this. Isn't he just the best thing?"

"Oh he's a fine boy all right."

"A fine boy, a gift from Jehovah. A true blessing. But I'll tellya, sometimes I'd like to wring his little neck. Stanley, Where's Fiona?"

"She's over there playing with Kimmer."

"Go get her and take her and Phillip out to the car. I'll be out there in a minute."

"OK."

"Did you hear about Sister Plenny's surgery?"

"No."

"Well, it turns out... WHAT, STANLEY?"

"Fiona got a splinter."

"Well, why don't you bring her over here and I'll take care of it?"

"OK."

"I tell you, sometimes I wonder why I ever... oh, there's my baby."

Stanley approached, carrying a squirming red-faced three-year old, screaming at the top of her lungs and kicking violently.

"Let's see it, where is it? WHERE'S THE SPLINTER STANLEY?"

"I don't know, it was there a minute ago."

Cheryl looked at the wriggling girl in Sister Cohen's arms. A strand of snot flapped out of Fiona's nose and stuck to her upper lip. Cheryl had always wanted a child of her own, but that was never going to happen.

Cheryl thought Clark was going to die. She sat in the waiting room of the hospital, staring at the magazines. He had been driving home when the other driver changed lanes and knocked Clark's car into a ditch. The other guy had just driven off down the road. Cheryl had been in the kitchen making dinner when the police called her.

She pulled four copies of The Watchtower out of her bag and put them on the end table with the other magazines. The doctor came out of the back and told her that Clark was going to be alright, but he would never walk again.

They sat still in the dark room, their faces lit in flashing blues by the television.

A modest beep from Cheryl's watch broke their stupor.

"Time to take your medicine, dear."

"OK."

Cheryl brought a small brown bottle from the kitchen, opened it and poured syrup into a small plastic test tube. She held it to Clark's lips and tipped it.

"I think I'll go to bed now," Cheryl said.

"OK. I'll be in there soon."

Cheryl walked down the unlit hallway, looked over her shoulder and entered the guest room. She closed the door silently behind her and turned on the light.

She sat in the chair by the ten-gallon tank. The garden snake had slithered into their duplex months ago.

Clark had wanted to kill it right away, but Cheryl had talked him into saving it.

"Hi Jimmy," she said.

"Hello, Cheryl," said the snake, politely. "How are you feeling right now?"

"I'm pretty tired."

"What did you do today?"

"I went out in service this morning. Then I cleaned Sister Bannister's house.

Then I made dinner and we went to the meeting. That's about it.

This man was so rude to me today."

"What happened?"

"Well, Sister Storz and I knocked on his door, and he answered it in his bathrobe.

I started to talk to him, and he laughed at us. He blew cigarette smoke in my face and swore at us."

"What did he say?"

"I can't say it, I told you, he swore."

"What did he say?"

"He told us to... fuck ourselves."

"What did you do?"

"I couldn't think of anything to say, so we just walked away.

People can be so mean."

"Well, what do you expect? You invade people's lives. You knock on their door and tell them that they're living the wrong way. What would you say to the Mormons if they came to your door?"

"Well, I'd tell them that they know part of the truth, but that their book is a bunch of lies that Satan made up to trick them."

"Would you? Would you really say that, or is that just what you're supposed to say? I wonder what you would really do if some handsome young saint knocked on your door."

"I told you what I'd do. I don't want to talk about it anymore."

"OK. How's Clark?"

"Look, I better go."

"Yes. Good night, Cheryl."

"Good night, Jimmy."

Five hours later, Cheryl was dreaming that she was holding a big baby mouse.

It looked like a pink apple. It had arms like a man, and a ring of straight grey hair around the back of its head. Instinctively, she put it into the microwave. Then suddenly she was tied to a toy slot-car track, and someone behind her was revving the car toward her legs. A great glowing angel was standing above her, saying

"I know it's pretty severe. Crittery bad. But it's OK, it'll be over soon.

Don't be afraid. At least it's night."

The angel offered her an opium pipe. As she reached for it, an enormous buzzing error sound filled the sky, as though Godpunishment was impending for the wrong choice. She reached out and hit the snooze button. She woke Clark up slowly, changed his diaper, and got him into his chair. She cooked them breakfast.

She had to leave to go to work. Clark stayed home to repair Brother Richards' grandfather clock.

Cheryl drove across the town to the Hayes' house. The summer sun blasted down on the roof of the Pacer, and the acidic smell of fermenting tomatoes freshly turned mud hung rotten in the still air. Little Jake answered the door.

"MOM! IT'S CHERYL!" he yelled, never breaking eye contact.

As Cheryl was vacuuming the living room, little Amber came out of the hallway with a small cage.

"Hey, look at my hamster Digby!" she said.

The girl had some sort of skin condition, little lesions and scabs everywhere.

"Oh, what a cute little guy." said Cheryl.

"You know, I have to feed mice to my pet snake."

"Eew, gross! That's mean!"

"I know, I don't like it, but that's what snakes eat. He doesn't like it either.

But I guess it's OK, they're already dead. They call the babies pinkies."

Amber started crying uncontrollably. She had a blister that surrounded her entire little finger.

Tuesday night was the book study at Paul Duncan's house. After the meeting, Clark was having a jovial conversation with Paul and Brother Langston. Cheryl hung on the outskirts of the circle, listening politely.

They had been watching TV for four hours when Cheryl said:

"This Letterman guy's so mean. I'm going to bed now dear."

"OK, I'll be there in a little bit."

Cheryl walked down the dark hallway to the bedroom door. She stopped and looked back.

The TV room was lit with flickering blue light and the invisible audience laughed at something. She turned back and silently entered the guest room.

"Aah, hello, Cheryl."

"Hi Jimmy."

"What's on your mind?"

"Hmm... nothing really."

"I find that rather difficult to believe."

"Well, actually I was wondering why everybody pretends to be happy all the time.

Like tonight, we went to the book study over at Paul Duncan's, and I was listening to the brothers talking after the meeting, and they were all joking around and pretending to be happy, but I know all of them, and I know that they're not really as happy and carefree as they act. It's like they're all trying to fool each other, but I think they all know better. And it just seems like they've been doing it for years, and I don't know if it'll ever change."

"And what about you? Don't you do that too?"

"I guess so."

"So why aren't you happy?"

"Well, I think you know that."

"Tell me."

"No."

"Is it because you have to spend all your time taking care of Clark?"

"Jimmy, stop it!"

"Is it because there's no sex for you anymore?"

"Shut up!"

"And no sex means no babies."

Outside the door, Clark lowered his head and rolled back into the living room.

The next morning, Cheryl made breakfast and drove off to clean the Cohen's house. Clark worked on the clock for half an hour, then put his tools down and rolled into the kitchen. His rubber wheels squeaked on the linoleum floor. He stared into the blender and sighed. He rolled down the long hallway and turned into the guest room. He stared into the terrarium.

When Cheryl came home, Clark was gone. She made herself a sandwich and walked into the guest room. The snake was curled up in the tank, but his head was gone. A pair of scissors lay nearby. Cheryl screamed wordlessly and cried for four minutes. She walked into the kitchen and called her sister. She ran sweating to the closet in their bedroom, and pulled out her old suitcase. She began packing clothing, toiletries, a stash of money she had been saving up. She walked into the living room and pulled the photo album from the bookshelf, and stuffed it into the suitcase. She sat down with a pen and paper for a minute, then she got up and walked to the bus station. Cheryl knew that he would never be able to find another woman.

Brother Langston pulled into the Huffs' driveway, pulled Clark's wheelchair out of the back of his van, helped Clark into it and said good-bye. Clark rolled up the ramp, and through the front door. He entered the kitchen and read the letter on the table. He sat quietly, red-faced, choking and crying. He wheeled out into the backyard, into the sunlight, under the peach tree that they planted when they first bought the house. Moldy squishy peaches lay on the dirt all around him.

Clark began picking them up and throwing them up at God, shouting:

"Why? Enough! Is this enough? Take it! Take it back! Aren't we done?

Aren't we even? Show me your face!"

One rotting peach sat contentedly in the dust just beside him, just out of reach.

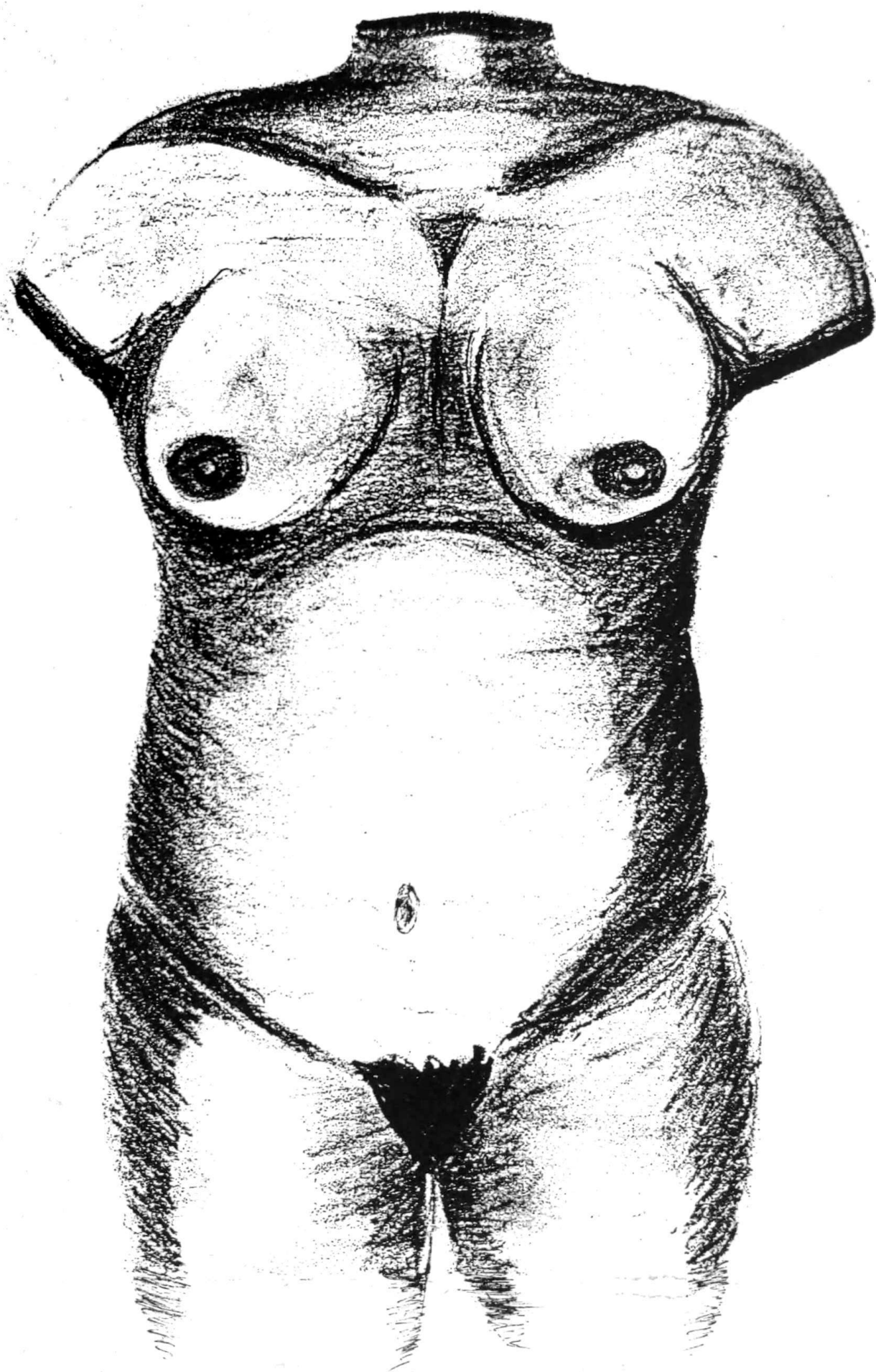
He leaned over the edge of his chair, sweating, straining to reach it.

the crying dream of boys

(places where the world might spontaneously combust/

vol.1.)

1. when two men in random yellow shirts and brown pants cross paths in a meadow behind a theoretical hundred year old building
2. toes, all small and ridiculous
3. "what violet frondescence fall?" rimbaud, 209
4. james joyce:
 - a. "he worked at night and laughed so loudly at his own 'bauchspeech' that nora would get up and tell him to stop writing and stop laughing so that she could get a bit of sleep. sometimes the absorption was so much that he lost consciousness. between two words he might insert two hundred more and a single page would extend to twenty or thirty pages. but the avalanche of language was too much."
5. uncle otto, after dinner siesta
6. a little boy maybe 3 feet big running up to the tallest tree in the whole of east portal park and him calling out to maybe someone in particular "i chased it!"
7.
 - a. dutch flat
 - b. rough and ready
 - c. volcano
 - d. fiddletown
 - e. preston castle, ione
8. sitting in a thai restaurant with a friend ive known since we were young, 12 years old young and two days apart, and him now in the navy and me now dating painters and sitting there in this restaurant on broadway and the woman across from us handing us a torn off section f of the newspaper and her having written in big hot pink letters "you 2 are on a mission aren't you?" and us turning the torn corner over to look for a clue and the broken headline saying "...plan scenic trip to Mother Lode."



common oral
formal oral
troubador

4 beats
3 beats
AB
CB
sea B
shanty
common form

trouba
CB
sea B
4 beats
AB
CB
trouba-
dor

A beats
C beats
4 beats
3 beats
sea B
shanty
troubador

4 beats oral
common formal
sea B
shanty
oral form

Be ashamed
of what your thinking.
It's unnatural, unclean,
and full of self-loathing
The evil one himself
pushes this upon you.
To pursue one's gratification
brings about elation
for the beast.

Judeo Christian ethics are
what should guide you.
Chase away impropriety
and rebuke the impure.
To touch your flesh
has eternal consequences.
To be fixed in its grasp
brings about your damnation

Do not speak of that
wretched vile act.
It pierces the faith
with a spear of disease.
Abandon the willingness
of this wicked world.
That would allow
the almighty word
to be rendered
meaningless.

CRACK HEAD

These grave days when isolation comes with reflection and all the visions and tribulations run up and down one's spine like a claw footed jumbo ant trying for heaven one moment then trotting towards hell the next. The ups and downs of the last years can make a tear fall from the sound of a laugh, a moan escape from a smile, a high ruin a low. The ups and downs of a continual mourning, a constant morning sunshine, knowing the day has begun and all there is is sorrow to look forward to.

And these days don't begin from air and water and biscuit juice, it comes in a wave of solemnly discarded situations of humility. Some people are brought to a cheek burning blush without the slightest nudge or prod into inner evaluation. Such people are quick to feel shame but even quicker to disregard such a trivial emotion as foolish nonsense. Then there are others who build great stone mason walls around their humility; a great prison asylum to ward off intruders and hold inside the dangerous manics of themselves which would reveal the most personal and sorrowful expanses of their trying souls. These walls don't come down easily. In some few strong beings the walls don't come down for years or lifetimes, but when the great iron wrecking ball of instance comes barreling down through the strong hold, the man within the wall comes crumbling down as well. All faith the person has had in themselves is destroyed. The bricks holding the wall together are not only shattered at the seams but cracked through the middle as well, so it takes years to rebuild. And in those years the person is a crawling insect of fear and faithless hope, reliving the great wrecking ball of humility breaking through the barrier over and over again until the mind begins to scream and clutch at itself without wit or reason or knowledge that it is going to be the ruin of itself... and in many cases it is.

Watching the steam rise from a four hole sewer grate in the middle of a shady skid row alley. The lights of the city seem to shy from such alleys in such a way so that the shadows seem to grow and crawl towards any onlooker until the shadow itself is the alley and the alley has become a predator and human eye the prey. Only the sad and lonely and lost wander down these alleys after the power of natural light loses its fight to darkness. I was the sad lonely lost, and so meandered down such a skid row alley, toting a jug of wine and all the baggage of madness I could possibly bare to tug with me in my crying mind, and propped my back up against a grimy green dumpster and began to howl my torment towards to the foggy gloom above and chug my red cheer doom beside the four hole sewer grate.

A babbling shuffle muff of a scraped human being came beating down the alley in my direction, walking in tune to its own muffled mumblings and head twitching jumbings so I thought it a ghost of my past out to finish me off in a manner that would be completely out of nature to my wishes. But coming through the steam, pouring through the great grate came a haggled woman worn by the rags she tried to claim but ended up claiming her—two pairs of jeans wrapped around her waist, one sagging just below the pocket line of the other, string-less hiking boots with tongue jutting outward and up, long green wind breaker over white sweatshirt, and a tattered brown cowboy hat—all dirtier than all the dirt mixed with grime and soot that could be found in the digestive system of a bowed out sewer rat.

She stopped beside me and began to wave her body in a dance, a simple wave of motion ushering down and around her body, beginning at her head and rippling down to her toes and back up. The ups and downs, baby, the ups and downs. Her greasy string hair swirling around her prematurely aged face all wrinkled and done with time so her lips constantly shriveled up above her green tooth smile which made my testicles shrivel inside themselves and all the grotesqueness of life echo in my heart. And when she was done with her strange ritualistic dance of meeting she popped a crack pipe in her mouth and slumped down beside me with her greasy back seeming to melt into the grimy green dumpster. She didn't talk to me at first. She talked to her shoes and pipe. She talked to the sidewalk. She talked to the dark.

I rolled a cigarette, drank my drink, and watched her blow crack into the still alley air. Then I decided to welcome my ghost of a guest and rolled her a cigarette as well. Now she turned that green god ghost smile on me and the stank of breath and crack shit roasted and roused up my nostrils so I had to turn away, but not before she shoved her pipe in my hand and told me to take a puff. "Push it up, push it up." She said, and so I did, all the while worrying about herpes and all the sort of sores you can see pussing and oozing from crack heads on every corner of every skid row street in every major city worthy enough in size to support a skid row and still fluster about in economic stability. The smoke went down cool and calm which in turn made my body feel cool calm relaxed man relax. And so I hoped the night would continue in such a groovy manner back in that shadow grave alley next to the steam rolling sewer grate, but my ghost lady crack back had other plans and through a haze of smoke and wine convinced me to take part in her swaying manner of madness out in the world without the walls of my comfort enclosure.

With her shuffling and talking to the sidewalk in the lead, I meandered about slapping my palm against my thigh and drinking the rest of my wine to the point where I wished I had more but I also wished this crazy groovy in front would come through with another couple of hits off the pipe. But she comes to a halt in the Tenderloin.

Sweet mad Tenderloin, so dark the shadows don't even fret with the light cause there is no light except the dull thuds of thunder and sparks rising from the beaten cracked asphalt beneath the Mad Lost who wander and coolly destroy everything around and about because they themselves have been destroyed by every possible opportunity and are on a rage of vengeance.

Sweet mad Tenderloin, where 20% of the street goblins reside and shelter among their lost mind kind in hopes of finding some salvation, prosperity, messiah to comfort them from the bitter fog barreling in from the chill burdened bay. And they curse on day by day filling their arms, spitting up teeth, talking to lampposts, kicking rag thirsty shopping carts, playing yelling games with the imaginary, and wishing always to find the missing card of the fifty-one which rattles around and throughout the tender washed up lobes of their minds.

Sweet mad Tenderloin, so sure in its manner it is destined to all come crumbling down with one quick swoop of the copper blues.

So ghost lady takes off and disappears in the dark of those godless streets to find some more white puff smoke, leaving me to fend for myself among the scavenging mad predators. And not long at all before a gum mouth old drooling hoodlum appears from the blackness to kick my feet and say: "You too close to my shit man." but I don't see any shit around so when the old man disperses back into his hollow hiding I remain rooted to my spot, still in hopes the sway groove crazy lady will return. But the man bum from the darkness returns grunting and swaggering in distraught, "I told you you too close to my shit, you too close, I'm going to cut your throat, you too close." and this crazy raving Tenderloin cat is waving a shank in my face and pointing to some over looked trash bags twenty feet away from my perch. "Sorry about your luck." I say because I could think of little else to say, and then went trotting down the old broken sidewalk in return to my own skid row home and wine, giving up on the crack lady who probably ran into a three legged dog she knew on personal conversational terms.

I stopped outside my building. The streets were too vibrant and full of life to go wandering indoors and out of the excitement. So I stood in the little cranny next to the second hand jewelry store below my building and rolled smoke after smoke watching all the scrounge down meanders of life walk by as they radiated their madness off the street lights and newspaper stands and neon taqueria signs and passing screech honk cars. I watched the hobo parade until large drops came falling from the black clad cloud sky and umbrellas began popping up everywhere, because even the lowest of luck down beats still have umbrellas,

except for one poor fool who came trotting from across the street to take refuge in my little cranny. And as he bummed a roll from me he asked, "What's a white boy doing out here?" I told him I lived in the building above which caused him to do a double take at this curious white skid row demon in the same cranny as he. "Do you get high?" He asked, and I had to say "yes" because I was already a little dizzy excellently brightly drunk and high. So he says, "Then let's go to your place out of the wet to spark up."

The man talked enough to drown out a waterfall. He had been out of prison for eight hours. He still carried his release documents under his arm, along with anti-psychotic drugs in his pocket that were a requirement to consume as a condition of his parole. And this man was smoking crack, jiving about money honey schemes to walk down the street balling in gold, rolling my cigarettes, sitting in my chair, and above all would be making me feel uncomfortable and regretful except he kept me high enough where I found his company entertaining and fluently easy to get along with.

In a grave mistake somewhere in the twilight hours of meaningless mumble I proudly announced that I was an aspiring and impoverished writer who's very best of friends during these cold and wet days was my trusted computer. Without my noticing, this man of scandalous opportunism made a mental note and already had my weaknesses pegged. But we continued on and chatted and smoked until the sun rose from its cosmic slumber, and still on and past the strike of a noon day bell until my mad companion, named Lafayette but going by Pete, exclaimed in a worried tone that he had a probation meeting in fifteen minutes at a location a half an hour walking distance away.

We burst from the building with fervent energy and busted down the humble afternoon streets as two wild saviors from sobriety with a grave circumstantial mission to remain free and allowed to roam the great expanses of the mind and the realms to bend within it. When we arrived in a cleaner part of the city, where the cigarette butts in the gutter were less and the feces didn't permeate the swirling air, we were before a shallow nameless building surrounded by cars and chain-linked fence. I was instructed to remain outside while my partner in crime went inside to make deals and smooth talk among inspecting eyes and scrutinizing propaganda. I did as I was told until I fell into a moment of sweet beautiful sleep, outside, on the sidewalk, people passing around or over, and when I awoke I had a slim idea of where I was, but couldn't think of any reason why. Upon viewing the large amount of cars parked outside I came to the rational conclusion I was at a rent-a-car establishment and went inside to ask the true meaning of my being in such a place, knowing I was meant to meet someone, but at a blank as to who.

Inside it smelled of linoleum and old paint. Faint breezes of drastic body odor rose from the bland stained bourbon furniture in which a solitary bald man bad ass sat reading some science tech magazine he was obviously unconcerned with and was only eyeing to take his mind elsewhere beyond these mad somber walls. He watched me, harassing me silently as I sat down beside him. I rubbed my chin. He shifted in his seat. I coughed. He sniffed. Finally I asked: "Is this the car rental place?" and he suddenly became a sullen child outside the principles office, staring down at his shoes and moving uncomfortably in his rickety cushion chair. "No man, this is, uh, this is probation man." and I felt a wave of sorrow come over me for the massive bad ass child and said: "Oh, sorry about your luck." because I could think of little else to say.

Pete came hustling through a back door, shot a god damned fool mad look my way, and then bust out the door into the street. I gave a final consolidating look towards my parole eternity bound neighbor on the bourbon furniture and then followed.

Outside, Pete stood shivering in anger. "I told you to wait outside. You trying to get me in shit?"

"No worries," I say. "I was only in there for a second looking to rent a car."

Across the street Pete saw an old lady tugging an ankle biting mutt behind her. He shook his head, beat at his awkward grey hat, then marched feet across the street yelling at the poor women that he was a

man in need and money was the only thing that could sooth his druggy soul. I felt my companion had lost his crack water mind, and suddenly grew aggravated at a sore sense of fear I had been hiding for the duration of our time together. So, as his back was turned, and the woman cowered behind her dog and against the old brick wall of building number nine in mind, I shot my feet around a close corner and made zig-zag maneuvers through the city until I was in the comfort of my bed and fast asleep in a dark forgettable world.

A great clanging banging brought me upright from darkness and into the madness of a confused headache. The light of the sky was bright but I was under the notion it should be covered in a blanket of siren hounded stars. Everything became a maze of confusion I couldn't work out in my mind, and as I stared straight ahead into a pondering oblivion the banging on the door continued. I stumbled from the bed to the abnormal large wooden door and swung it wide in anger ready to berate any hounding fool who would knock with such a racket in a time of sleep. But once the door was wide and open my anger flew, my heart drooped, dread boiled in my bowels.

Pete's eyes were in a Hades fire rage. His jaw ground imaginary concrete pebble. "Give me sixty dollars or I'm taking your computer," he said. My baby boy computer with so many irreplaceable words. "Like hell you are," I say and then everything becomes a fuzzy eyed situation of flying fists, body throwing clanging against plaster walls, toppled books, computer wire ripping from sockets, and in the end I sit down in a huff, defeated and distraught, because this man was straight from prison and knew how to take and deliver a punch out of solitary skill and survival, and I was a school pen writer. So I say, "why are you doing this?"—"Because you don't just ditch out on a man like you did."—"Fuck you, you're crazy."—"I have a problem with abandonment."—"No shit."

With a bowed head deep in humility, my vision of humanity shattered broken crumbled, I walked to the ATM with Pete by my side banging my computer around as collateral, and committed an act of theft by placing an empty white envelope into the great banking system and retrieving sixty dollars I didn't have. Once the money was in my corrupt hooligan friend's hand he tossed the computer over to me and said, "You know, you're white chocolate, you're cool, I'll buy you some vodka and treat you to a pipe load." And I thought 'what the hell' since it was my money of a sort and I might as well make use of it even if somebody is treating, with my green, from their own filthy pocket. So we wandered around the grave Tenderloin until we found a toothless seller and settled into an alley to silently drink cheap hard gut liquor and smoke the smooth cool relax. When the pipe was burned low and my friend sat twitching his fingers around his crusted shoelaces, I got up and took my leave with excuses I was going to sleep. He said he would meet up with me in a couple of hours.

I shuffled home, packed a bag, and left my apartment for a week. When I got back, for weeks afterward, there were strange callings from the street with harmonica accompaniment—which had been stolen from me—to get in the building door, up the marble steps, and into my room. All the while I huddled in bed in a mad groaning depression, humiliation sweating from my pores, the outside world having become a savage toothed beast without morals. The great iron walls I had built so long ago had finally fallen with one giant swinging anvil from Hell and I had become the crawling insect looking for solace in every high water evolutionary sight, but only finding the remains and rubble of humanity's humility.

On a grey sorrowful morning afternoon I walked out my building's door to a wet street and found my villain asleep in a puddle of urine, dried shit, and stomped gum. I looked on for a moment and then said, "Sorry about your luck," because I could think of little else to say, and then continued onward down the ragged streets of my skid row home.



A Lesson In History

We walked in silence, as we always had before, to the edge of the world where the ocean meets the land. The breeze began to pick up as twilight decided to play out her harmonious responsibility, making humanity seem heavy, purple and secretive. I watched Johnny's eyes as they reflected the soft glow of the gas lanterns lit by the contented little boats that lined the harbor. In the distance a bell rang, keeping time with the ebb and flow of the sea and her impeccable rhythm. I was at first in awe of the entire scene and then, as if by magic, I was transformed into the moment with subtle and absolute clarity. I had things to say to Johnny and they hurt from a place that was sacred and genuine. We stood, looking out, and for just one instant, we were those two lucky and lonely people that had fallen in love seven years prior. I wanted the hands of time to freeze, to show mercy. I wanted all the past kisses and the hugs and all the secrets whispered and moreover the secrets implied to be everything they had always been before. I reached out to touch his long slender arm. He tensed for a brief second and then relaxed, letting his pride fall to the wayside in order to understand.

"It's over isn't it," he said, his voice trailing off slightly at the end. He looked away from me and out across the water. I watched his face as a single tear fell from his flushed cheek.

"It's been over for a long time Jon. I am not about to go traipsing all over the world again in pursuit of your dreams. I have dreams Jon." My words felt permeable and thin as they escaped me. I couldn't seem to discover the certainty in all of this and the lack of evidence made me feel as though I would soon lose my mind.

He looked at me, his calm, thin face hard with determination, his eye's petitioning me for strength within our exhausted situation. I wanted to hold him, to tell him the truth, that I was afraid of us and of the future and perhaps even of things that would never actually be. I wanted to scream at God and everyone else for denying our right to be open about our concern for each other, our love. Two men that care for each other don't hide behind obligatory social brick walls and artificial acceptances like so much societal filler. But we did. And for that we paid with our pride and our hearts, perhaps even our ability to grasp any true similitude of affection, of grace, even faith.

"I don't have to play music anymore, Kevin," he offered weakly. He and I both knew it was a lie and I felt oddly embarrassed for him. He took in a deep, wavering breath. Placing his hands deep into his pockets, he fished out a pack of Camel cigarettes. Introducing one of the tightly packed cigarettes to his thin lips, he lit the end with professional grace, as only a seasoned smoker could. His face lit up as the lighter lent a spooky glow to his boyish charm.

"Some how you make that look cool," I said, masking my true thoughts behind trivial things. He blew the smoke into the air, thin curls of wispy grey soaked magically into the increasing shadows, disappearing uneventfully into the past.

I turned away, choosing to hide, making every minute count as zero. I really had nothing to offer. Eventually I felt his warm hand rest carefully upon my shoulder, respectfully, fearfully. It was only for a minute and then it fell free from it's once trusted perch. I listened to the crunchy foot-falls of his tired sneakers as they too soaked magically into the increasing shadows, disappearing uneventfully into the past. I never once looked back.

even more fancy uses for the term “punk rock”

I was drunk. So drumdrowned (screwed down) and pie-eyed that friends more aware than I felt inclined to inquire, “you’re not driving, are you?” I wasn’t driving. I was going to take my bike. I love my bike. It fits me well. The time was about two o’clock, in the a.m. Late night. Nearing early morning. The party was starting to wind down. You could tell from all the glassy eyes turning door-ward. I had left my bike at my friend’s house and he was leaving, so I was beckoned to go with, on foot, which I did, to get my bike, which I did. I started riding it. The wind whipped around my face and hair in a pleasing way. It pooled up in my ear orifices as a constant reminder that I was moving. I was swerving a bit. But, it was very controlled. Like the way people flail about in a loose controlled fashion when they are practicing martial arts with names like “Drunken Fist”, and...that other Brazilian one...you know. Like that.

More a widening of stance than a lessening of ability.

I rode through the barren sleepy river town streets.

I soon wheeled by the following scene:

A house, probably built around the 1920’s or 30’s. quaint cottage style. Remnants of Victorian influence smattered about. Pronounced staircase tapping the sidewalk.

In the yard, on the stairs, on the grassy area on the other side of the sidewalk, on the driveway...things. People’s things. As though the house had had enough of the clutter and in a purging fit, put price tags on several of its contents and threw the bulk of them up. It was an unmanned garage sale. I stopped my bike. I figured on one of two things; a) they had left these things wanting late night shoppers to peruse at their leisure, and, expecting them to be honest, leave money on the stairs somewhere. Or b) they were just too lazy to cover and/or move things, and were going to start back up the next day, and though they would prefer for the items to be left alone, they realized that that was an impossibility and would just settle for people not assuming the things were free and/or taking any large amount of them. The things were too nice to just be free, and I didn’t see any “Free” signs or anything. Honestly, regardless of what I might have tried to objectively tell myself the true intentions of the garage sale people were, I was, very deliberately and with many justifications of grandeur, going to leave the scene (in the still of the night) with any such choice items that I might happen to run across. One of the first things that my attention lit upon was a glass-framed poster of a map of Italy. It was one of those folded up maps (purchased in Italy, I deduced from the Lira price tag still attached) that was unfolded and then framed. I wanted it. I put several dollar bills on one of the steps, along with a note explaining what I had taken and contact information should they require more money. I awkwardly held the heavy framed thing up with my

left hand, grabbed my handlebars with my right, and took off. I immediately noticed that what was once an amusing multi-wheeled saunter from side to side, had now become a struggle to ride straight. I kept having to readjust my grip on the glass behemoth, and steering seemed to be occupying an annoying amount of my concentration. I was chugging along, but it was cumbersome. And then, I came upon a pile of leaves. I swerved. Too sharply.

The front tire stopped cooperating.

I attacked the ground from the left side of the bike. My amazingly reflexive body fell limp, anticipating the impact. My upper body surfed the concrete like a skipping stone makes contact with the water prior to its lifting off again. My chest area and left, frame-holding hand hit the ground first, my head momentarily after, the forehead part scraping the ground. Unlike a skipping stone, my inertia vanished and I came to a rest.

The glass shattered expertly when it hit. It broke the sleepy silence so efficiently that there seemed to exist an echo, although the conditions were not even close to appropriate for such aural phenomena. I popped right up (thank ye lord, for your numbing alcohols!)

I scuttled the framed paper from under the broken glass, making several “tinkle” and “scrubble” noises. I left without even checking my wounds. I felt a moist stickiness on the salvaged map in my hand. I remember thinking at the moment that it could be some sort of glue on the back of the poster. You know, like wallpaper paste or something.

When I was almost home, I realized that it was my blood on the map. Lots of it. I had cut my hand on the glass. My forehead hurt. My knee was scraped. I smeared blood on my front door as I opened it. I put my bike in the corner, washed off my cut bloody hand, grabbed a paper towel, folded it appropriately and scotch taped it around my bloodiness. My forehead and knee were tame and manageable and had stopped bleeding already.

They were just very scraped. Road rash, etc. I investigated and found no other cuts. I set the map out for the blood to dry. It is my cherished prize. It is up on my wall today, dried blood streaming across like fingers of a river. Because the glass fiddled only with my lower palm, my bandaged hand still types with the accuracy that I am used to. I can even play guitar still. I can't wear a hat, and it hurts to furl my brow. But, I have a feeling that this head wound might appear “manly” or “sexy” to some. That's probably mostly projection. Because, very seriously, pain makes me feel powerful. Like I've been through something (and succeeded!...and SURVIVED!!!). Makes me exude a confident fatigue. An accomplished nonchalance. Like I am a deserved recipient of the admiration associated with utterances such as “now that, my friend, is punk rock.”

...I think I'll get another tattoo...

How to Juggle

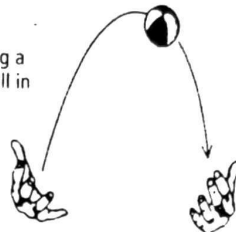
Three Steps to Success

Before you start:

Stand relaxed, feet slightly apart, with arms bent at right angles and elbows at your sides. Relax and focus on each of the steps, juggling is a calm action, so take your time.

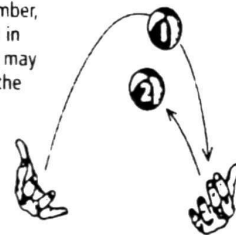
Step 1:

Juggling is based on one simple motion: throwing a ball from one hand to the other. Take just one ball in your hand and throw it in an arch to your other hand. Practice throwing the ball from both your right and your left hand. make sure you throw the ball in an eye-level arch. Practice this step until you are confident with it.



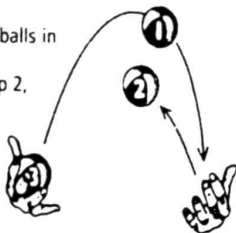
Step 2:

Now you are ready for two balls. Hold a ball in each hand. Make the same action as in Step 1, but as the first ball is coming down, throw the second ball up UNDER the first. Remember, both balls should be making the same motion as in Step 1. Both throws should be equal in height. It may help to count the throws "one, two" so you get the timing right. At first it may be hard to catch the balls after you throw them, but be calm and patient and it will happen. Practice throwing the first ball from both your right and left hand. Take your time with this step and make sure you're comfortable with it before moving on to Step 3. If you get stuck, go back to one ball for a while.

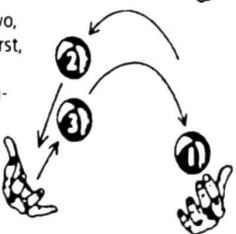


Step 3:

This is it! You're ready to try three balls. Put two balls in your favorite hand and one in the other hand. Remember to relax and concentrate. Just as in Step 2, you're going to throw one ball at a time, alternating hands. Throw one of the balls from the hand with two balls, and as it comes down, throw the second ball under it. As the second ball comes down, throw the third ball under it.



Again, try counting your throw out loud, "one, two, three". Don't worry about catching the balls at first, just keep throwing. Once you're able to throw all three balls properly, begin concentrating on catching and throwing. You will quickly be able to catch and throw more and more balls, "...four, five, six, etc." Now you're getting it. In fact, you're juggling. Congratulations!



All you need now is practice. Keep going. If you get stuck, just go back to two balls for a refresher. Don't get frustrated, relax and enjoy. Soon it will become second nature.